

CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS REPORT

Our Christmas bird census was held by a meager number of loyal birders who dared the elements to do their worst, which was done! Under the most provoking conditions imaginable we carried out our plans with the following results in this kind of weather - rain; temperature 40; visibility at its worst - from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Creve Coeur Lake, Horseshoe Lake, and Alton Dam; December 26.

Observers were divided into two parties. Party I, four observers together, 6 hours, 6 miles; Party II, one observer, 6 hours, $6\frac{1}{2}$ observation miles, total 12 hours, $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles of observation.

Pied-billed grebe, 1; Mallard, 25; American pintail, 10; Blue-winged teal, 10; Ring-necked duck, 2; Greater scaup duck, 4; Lesser scaup duck, 16; American merganser, 4; Cooper's hawk, 1; Red-tailed hawk, 1; Red-shouldered hawk, 4; Sparrow hawk, 5; Herring gull, 10; Ring-billed gull, 2; Screech owl, 1; Flicker, 3; Red-bellied woodpecker, 1; Red-headed woodpecker, 4; Hairy woodpecker, 2; Downy woodpecker, 7; Prairie horned lark, 20; Bluejay, 3; Crow, 429; Black capped chickadee, 11; Carolina chickadee, 13; Tufted titmouse, 25; White-breasted nuthatch, 2; Brown creeper, 4; Carolina wren, 3; Mockingbird, 1; Ruby-crowned kinglet, 1; Migrant shrike, 1; Starling, 22; House sparrow, 65; European tree sparrow, 52; Meadow lark, 16; Red-winged blackbird, 1; Cardinal, 26; Slate-colored junco, 86; Eastern tree sparrow, 134; Fox sparrow, 1; Song sparrow, 24. Total 42 species, 1053 individuals.

The best finds of the day were the Greater Scaup, an uncommon and particularly hard to identify species (because of its similarity to the Lesser Scaup); Pied-billed Grebe, late date; Blue-winged Teal, late date; European Tree Sparrow, because this is distinctively our own bird, and only from the St. Louis region can a Christmas bird census be submitted with this species listed. We are proud of this bird and are watching with eagerness its expansion. Sorry the weather bluffed out so many of you but surely we'll do a lot better on spring hunts.

From an absentee member of the St. Louis Bird Club - Mr. Tom Kirksey - comes a report of the first list from the El Paso region, which was lucky enough to have one of our best birders as a "guest conductor" at Christmas time. The El Paso Times announces what may prove to be one of the best lists in the country, namely, 100 different species in a total of 6797 individuals observed.

1938 RESUME

The past birding season has been a profitable one to many of us. Wayne Short reports that his 1938 mileage in the pursuit of birds was 5200, spread over 122 days of birding, averaging $3\frac{1}{4}$ hours per day. Miss L. R. Ernst spent less time but with as good results. Webster Groves birders are to be commended for their time spent in the field, particularly because of their regularity - a monthly bird census at Ranken and bird observations of some nature nearly every Sunday. Those of you who have let the birds come to you since you wouldn't go to them are urged to keep watching. Every little bit helps.

Miss Ernst and Mr. Short ran so close a race that even a photo-finish couldn't untie the 216 species each chalked up for the year. The two lists combined total 235 species. Approximately 317 species could be seen in this region over the period of a year if one garnered all the accidentals and casuals. Anything over 200 is a real job. Try it!

We have found it interesting to compile a list of what might be called the best birds in the region in 1938 from available records. We hope it may be a far finer one in coming years, but this is recorded for what it is worth now that you might know exactly what has been done. The following are listed according to local unusualness, considered in the light of their Missouri status, observation date, rarity in the region, or for some other reason. No two individuals will agree that the birds are listed in their right order, but any one is a species well worth noting, if seen in this region:

1. Purple Sandpiper
2. Arkansas Kingbird
3. Ruddy Turnstone (spring)
4. Little Brown Crane
5. Red-backed Sandpiper (fall)
6. Old Squaw
7. Black-bellied Plover (fall)
8. Willet

9. Yellow Rail
10. Wood Ibis
11. Greater Scaup
12. White-winged Scoter
13. American Golden Plover (fall)
14. Stilt Sandpiper
15. Wilson's Phalarope
16. Yellow-crowned Night Heron

Honorable Mention: Duck Hawk, Goshawk, Swainson's Hawk, Connecticut Warbler

LET US FEED THE BIRDS-

and put out water for them if possible. We owe them this much, as compensation for songs, entertainment and services rendered in gardens, lawns and parks.

For the Insectivorous Birds:

Suet and plenty of it. It can be served in several ways:

1. Sliced like bread and inserted behind an 8-inch square of half-inch wire mesh pocket, three sides nailed to the side of a tree or post with the top left open. If squirrels or other rodents dig out the suet from above, the opening can be protected by a loose overhanging flap.
2. Wrapped round and round with string or wire and laid on the floor of the food tray.
3. A dime store wire soap holder can be packed with suet instead of soap, and hung outdoors.
4. An inverted wire frame protector for electric light bulbs can be filled with suet and suspended by a wire.
5. A coconut can be cut off near one end, stuffed with suet and nut kernels and hung from a tree branch.
6. A board or log can be drilled partly through with a large auger bit and the holes filled with suet.
7. Suet, fat or grease from the pan can be melted and poured on logs, branches or rough wood.
8. The ham bone, hung up, will soon be picked clean.

For the Seed Eating Birds:

Sunflower seed seems to be bird preference No. 1 by all birds, whether insectivorous or seed eaters because of the sweet flavor and oily content of the kernel.

Bread crumbs and dinner table sweepings are next in demand, and the feeding tray is a better place to dispose of them than the garbage can.

Hemp (especially for the cardinals), wheat, kaffir corn or any other seed mixture is desirable.

Millet, not especially recommended for the food tray because it is too well liked by the ever-present hungry horde of English sparrows, is a life saver for the juncos if scattered over a well-tramped-down area of new snow, when snow or sleet covers their natural source of food supply in weeds and bushes.

Nuts of all kinds, from walnut to soft shelled, if cracked open and the kernels left inside, will be thoroughly cleaned out by chickadees, titmice and nut-hatches - and squirrels of course.

Popped pop-corn and peanuts with the shells partly broken, when strung on thin wire and festooned on bushes, are useful and ornamental.

A slice of stale bread water-softened and the water squeezed out can be hand rubbed into the tree bark, and will be relished by birds.

The old discarded Christmas tree can be re-planted outdoors and turned into a year-round Bird's Christmas Tree.

Feeding Stations:

The simplest form is an inverted wooden box lid fastened on to the window sill. The upturned edges keep the seed from flowing away, but holes should be bored thru the floor to drain off rain.

An easily removable roofed-over tray can be made from a box, front and back to be open but a 2 or 3 inch wide strip fastened to the back and cut the exact length of the window frame. By tilting up one end the strip can be fitted into the window groove and the box will rest securely on the sill.

The Traveling Cafeteria is a roofed over feeding tray suspended on a trolley wire running from porch to post. It can be pulled in to the porch, filled with food and then pulled out and parked about six feet away, out of the jumping reach of squirrels.

(Feeding squirrels is all right, but not on the bird food tray, for they will not let the birds come near it).

A more elaborate food tray is the Weathervane Revolving tray with glass beck, turning swivel-like on an iron pole away from the prevailing wind.

A still more elaborate food palace is a carpenter-made window box made to fit the lower open window and projecting into the room about 12 inches; back, sides and top of glass, the wooden floor extending outside as well as inside. Food or a pan of water can be put out through a removable slot. See "Wild Bird Guests" by Baynes, for a complete description.

Shelters:

A box with 3 inch opening at the bottom and roosts fitted inside is a night shelter for birds to use in winter. See plans in Farmers Bulletin 1456 "Homes for Birds", U.S.D.A.

For ground shelters see Circular 356 Agr. Extension Service, U. of Mo.

You might be interested to know that Rural Mail Carriers will take 3 to 5 pound packages of seed, postage free, and deliver to persons on the route or scatter seed along the route. See local post-office for details.

RANDOM NOTES

Unseasonably warm weather is helping to keep ducks in the vicinity in large numbers. On January 2, Ernst, Watson and Short had 8 different species: 300 to 600 Mallards; 2 Black Ducks; 100 Pintails; 3 Redheads (by far the best

bird of the New Year and a fine date); 3 Ring-necked Ducks; 10 Lesser Scaup; 90 American Goldeneye and 35 American Mergansers. Hundreds of individuals could not be identified because of visibility. Many thousand were estimated at Horseshoe Lake during Christmas week by a reliable hunter.

Marsh and Sparrow Hawks are abundant.

Among the species scarce here in winter but seen on either Jan. 2 or 4 are these: 2 Kingfishers; 1 Bluebird; 1 Golden-crowned Kinglet; 2 Pine Siskins; 2 Swamp Sparrows.

One flock of European Tree Sparrows at Horseshoe Lake numbered 90 individuals.

One Bald Eagle soaring over the Mississippi River at Peruque on December 30, and another during the first week of January near Alton Dam, closed the old and opened the New Year with glory.